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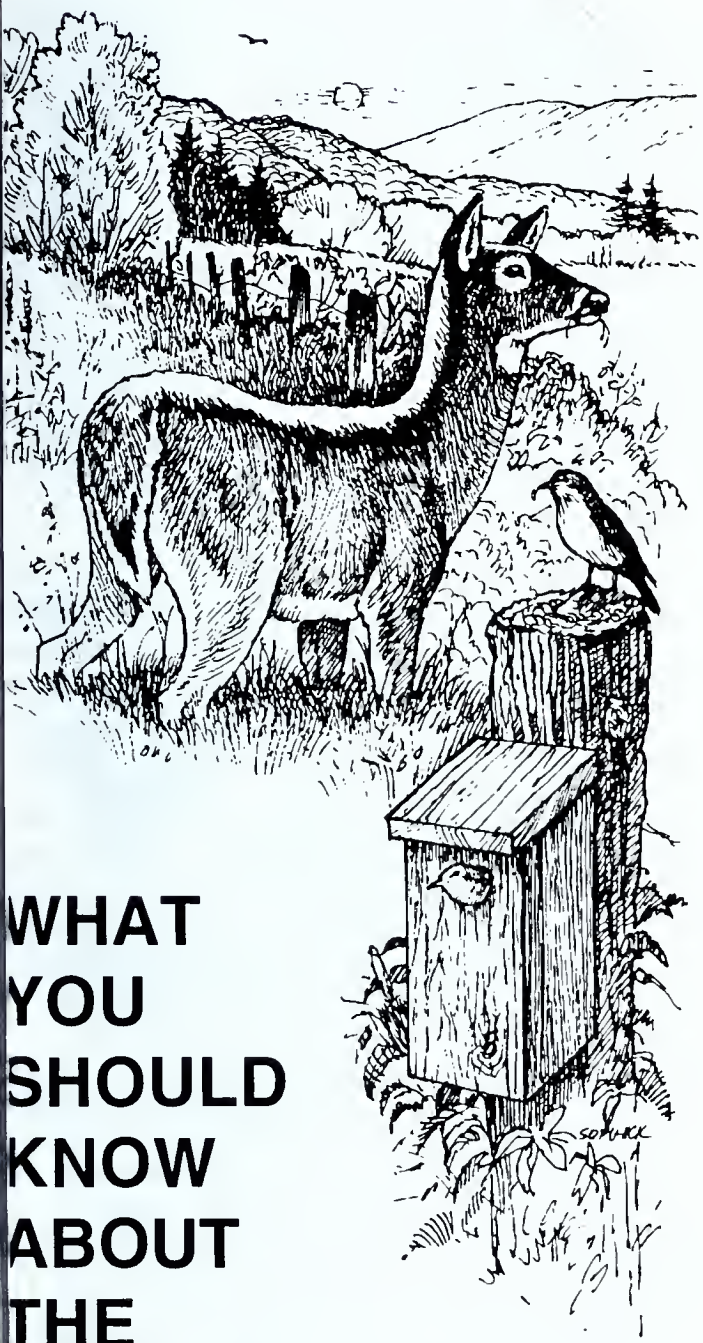

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

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For more than 100 years, the Game Commission has managed the Commonwealth's wildlife resources for all Pennsylvanians. With the help of more than 700 full-time employees and thousands of part-timers and volunteers, the agency provides a host of benefits to wildlife, state residents and visitors.

Wildlife has always been an important part of Pennsylvania's cultural heritage. Every day, it touches the lives of countless Pennsylvanians and most of us consider it to be a state treasure.

In the late 1800's however, wildlife was dwindling as a result of deforestation, pollution and unregulated hunting and trapping. From this dark period emerged the Game Commission, created to protect and conserve wildlife. The wildlife diversity we enjoy today is largely due to the agency's progressive, scientifically-based wildlife management programs and help from countless Pennsylvanians and outdoors organizations. It's a partnership that has accomplished much for wildlife since the turn of the century, and no doubt will continue to.

Funded primarily by hunting licenses revenues, state game lands timber sale profits, and a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, the Commission is almost entirely supported by hunters, or assets that have been procured with hunters' dollars. The Commission does not receive state General Fund appropriations. More than half it's annual revenue comes from license sales, a relatively fixed income source. License fees cannot be increased without approval of the General Assembly, and fee increases have historically come only about every 10 years.

This brochure has been compiled to acquaint you with the Commission's mission, and the many services and recreational opportunities the agency provides. It covers the scope of the agency's operations and highlights important benefits to Pennsylvanians.

Wildlife Management

The Commission is responsible for managing all of Pennsylvania's wild birds and mammals. **Wildlife management is conservation in its most recognizable form**. It's the process used to manage game and other wildlife populations. It includes: monitoring wildlife populations, establishing laws and regulations, setting seasons and bag limits, making habitat improvements, providing outright protection, informing and educating the public and assessing public expectations and satisfaction. Each offers varying benefits to wildlife and Pennsylvanians.

The Commonwealth's white-tailed deer, black bear and wild turkey populations serve as excellent examples of successful wildlife management. Although each species is hunted, today they inhabit the state in record numbers as a result of Commission programs involving trap-and-transfer work, habitat improvement, research and regulated seasons and bag limits. **Pennsylvania currently is home to more deer, bear and turkeys than when colonists first arrived**.

One of the agency's more visible examples of wildlife management is **species reintroductions**. The Commission has successfully reintroduced beavers, river otters, elk, bald eagles, ospreys and peregrine falcons. Your chance of seeing one of these species is greater today than ever because of these efforts. Other examples include **managing endangered species**, constructing and placing nest structures for bluebirds and wood ducks; gating caves to protect important bat colonies, performing field studies on a variety of wildlife; and conducting wildlife censuses and surveys.

Law Enforcement

Wildlife law enforcement is one of the Game Commission's most important responsibilities. It's conducted by a force comprising about **200 full-time wildlife conservation officers** and close to **1,000 deputy wildlife conservation officers**. A full-time officer's area of responsibility is about 350 square miles; deputies help patrol it. Conservation officer duties include enforcing hunting and trapping laws to protect wildlife, investigating hunting accidents, conducting wildlife surveys and providing educational programs. Officers are uniformed and have received extensive law enforcement and wildlife management training.

All full-time officers are graduates of the Game Commission's **Ross Leffler School of Conservation**, America's first wildlife conservation officer school. More than 500 officers have graduated from the school since it was established in 1936.

Wildlife conservation officers are empowered to enforce the Game and Wildlife Code, Fish and Boat Code, Forestry Laws and Pennsylvania's Crimes Code, and they frequently **assist local and state police,** especially in rural areas. Our officers have been involved in missing person searches, guiding police in remote wilderness areas and drug eradication programs. Officers also **provide assistance in emergency responses to accidents and disasters.**

Land Management

The Commission is deeply involved in **land management**, because it's one of the most effective and important ways to manage wildlife. To ensure wild animals always have food and shelter, the agency, since 1920, has been purchasing lands for inclusion in its **state game lands system**, which currently contains about 300 separate tracts comprising a total of about **1.4 million acres**. Each game lands has an individual management plan designed to improve wildlife habitat and provide recreational opportunities. Plans are carried out by the agency's **Food and Cover Corps.** Hunters, anglers, hikers, birdwatchers and other wildlife enthusiasts are welcome on game lands. The Commission also maintains visitors centers at its Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas, places where there's a great chance to see wildlife and an opportunity to view bird and mammal displays.

The agency runs three cooperative public access programs that open through agreements about 4.5 million acres of private property to public hunting and trapping. The **Farm Game, Forest Game and Safety Zone programs** provide people outstanding hunting and trapping opportunities. Landowners participating in these programs receive pheasant stockings, *Pennsylvania Game News* subscriptions and habitat improvements. Other programs benefiting landowners offered by the Game Commission, or in which the agency participates, include the **Streambank Fencing Program**, where the agency provides labor, equipment and materials to fence livestock out of streams and ultimately improve water quality and streamside habitat; and **Partners For Wildlife**, which provides manpower and equipment to restore and build wetlands.

The Commission owns and operates the **Howard Nursery**, which annually produces about **five million seedlings** to improve wildlife habitat on public and private properties. Seedlings are given to landowners enrolled in the agency's public access programs, planted on game lands and sold

— at cost — to the public. The agency also provides a **wildlife seed mix** to landowners interested in providing food and cover for wildlife.

In addition, the Commission annually **reviews hundreds of land development permit applications (road, bridge, building construction) for wildlife impacts**. If problems are apparent, the agency recommends ways to reduce or eliminate wildlife conflicts.

Information And Education

Recognizing an informed and educated public better understands wildlife and the basic concepts of wildlife management, education has always been a critical component of the Commission's operations. A recent survey showed **one of every two Pennsylvanians is looking for more information about wildlife**. To meet that demand, the agency dedicates an extraordinary amount of manpower to the never-ending effort of spreading the word and educating Pennsylvanians about wildlife. Officers, professional staff and countless volunteers annually log tens of thousands of hours giving wildlife programs at schools, fairs, outdoors shows and banquets.

The Commission publishes ***Pennsylvania Game News*** and a variety of books and brochures, and produces top-quality videos such as ***On the Trail of Pennsylvania's Black Bears*** and ***Pennsylvania Whitetails — Living With Change.*** In addition, the Commission annually publishes scores of news releases and handles thousands of media inquiries concerning wildlife — often providing photographs and video footage to outdoor writers, newspaper editors and television news reporters.

With the help of 3,000 volunteer instructors, the agency annually trains about 40,000 students in its **Hunter-Trapper Education Program.** The Commission coordinates Pennsylvania's **Project WILD** program, which provides factual information concerning wildlife and habitat to hundreds of thousands of students. The statewide Project WILD network has 12,000 certified instructors, many of whom are school teachers.

The Commission is also deeply involved in programs that acquaint young people with outdoors activities or provide them a chance to do something constructive for wildlife. Officers and staff spend considerable time speaking at or helping coordinate youth field days and conservation camps and seminars. The agency also coordinates the annual Youth Hunter Education Challenge.

Special Services

The Commission offers many other services. It **issues all hunting and furtaking licenses** and wildlife rehabilitator and taxidermist permits. The agency also annually raises and **releases more than 200,000 pheasants** and provides **shooting ranges** on many game lands throughout the state.

The Game Commission maintains six region offices throughout the state. Office telephone numbers, addresses and the counties each office serves are:

Northwest Region, P.O. Box 31, Franklin 16323 — Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren counties. Telephone: 1-800-533-6764 or 814-432-3187.

Southwest Region, P.O. Box A, Ligonier 15658 — Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland counties. Telephone: 1-800-243-8519 or 412-238-9523.

Northcentral Region, P.O. Box 5038, Jersey Shore 17740 — Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga and Union counties. Telephone: 1-800-422-7551 and 717-398-4744.

Southcentral Region, P.O. Box 537, Huntingdon 16652 — Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry and Snyder counties. Telephone: 1-800-422-7554 or 814-643-1831.

Northeast Region, P.O. Box 220, Dallas 18612 — Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming counties. Telephone: 1-800-228-0789 or 717-675-1143.

Southeast Region, RD 2, Box 2584, Reading 19605 — Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Schuylkill and York counties. Telephone: 1-800-228-0791 or 610-926-3136.

Pennsylvania Game Commission
2001 Elmerton Ave.
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797
717-787-4250

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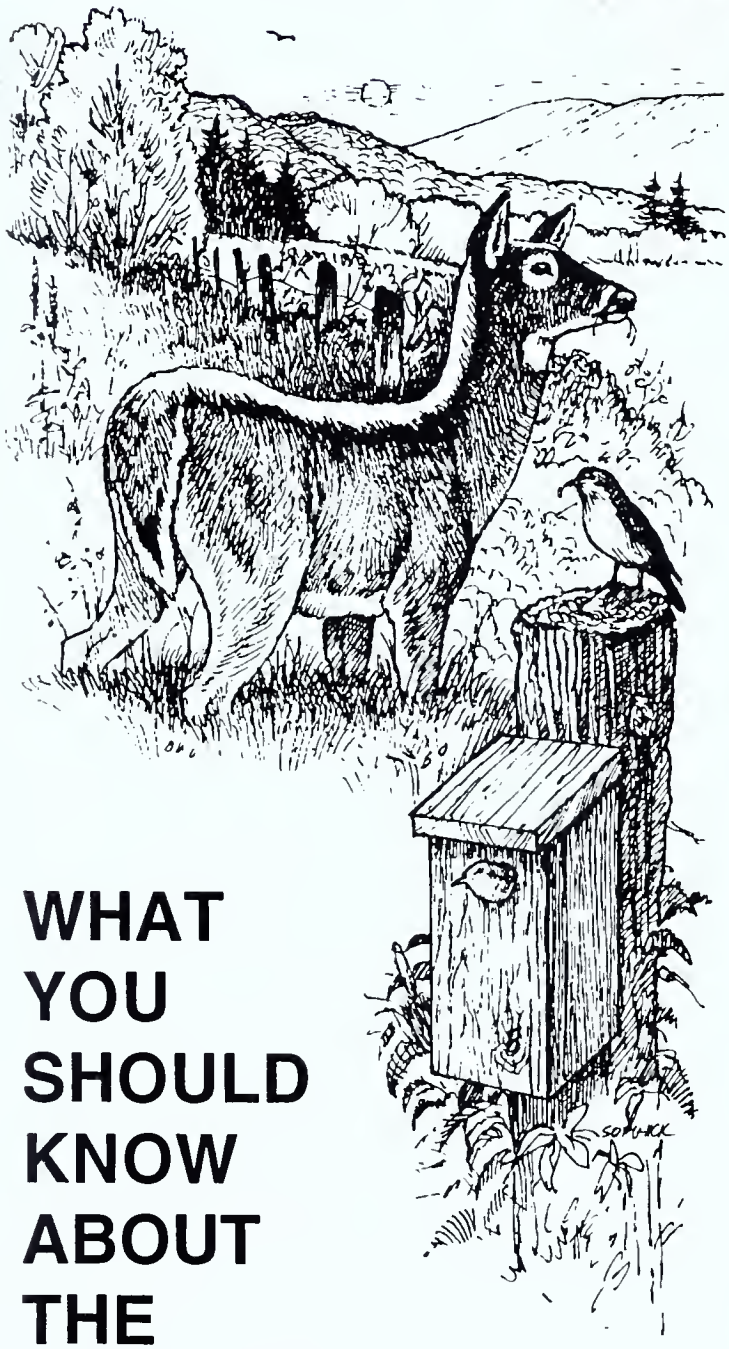

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